

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**  
**NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ**  
12TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

April 27, 2009

Mayor Michael Bloomberg  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Bloomberg:

We are writing to express our concern with the planned closing of Engine Company 271/ Ladder Co. 124, located at 392 Himrod Street in Bushwick, Brooklyn. Although this company is physically located in Brooklyn, it is important to note that it also serves as first responder to emergencies in Queens due to the firehouse's close proximity to the Ridgewood, community.

While we understand the gravity of the City's current fiscal crisis, we unequivocally oppose any cuts which compromise fire services for city residents. We strongly urge you to reconsider closing any further houses in the City, particularly those in Brooklyn. The proposed closing represents a disproportionate number in Brooklyn. During the last cuts to fire services, the borough lost four firehouses – with each community in need of a local stationhouse.

The proposed closing of Engine Co 271/Ladder 124 leaves our communities particularly vulnerable in the case of an emergency. It will create a virtual vacuum of services in the area, jeopardizing the safety of hundreds of homeowners, more than 600 small businesses, 4 schools, numerous faith-based institutions, a major hospital facility, Wyckoff Heights Medical Center, and thousands of public transit commuters who rely on the underground L trains stations and the above ground M train station – all within a few local blocks. Firefighters themselves have testified that just 30 seconds can make a difference in saving lives, yet the closing will certainly increase response times for incidents that occur in these communities.

We cannot afford to stretch so thin city services that impact the public's safety. The recent night closings of Engine 271 have already resulted in the loss of several homes when in the early morning of March 18<sup>th</sup> a three alarm fire erupted and destroyed 2-3 homes and neighboring small businesses near Stanhope and Wyckoff Avenue. This fire caused property damage and the displacement of several families and shopkeepers. Although Engine 271 was only a few blocks away from the fire, it was closed and unable to respond. Fortunately, the firehouse was opened on March 24<sup>th</sup> when a fire erupted at 376 Palmetto Street in Bushwick. According to report and witnesses, residents were unable to access the building's fire escapes due to heavy smoke and flames. Thanks to the first firefighters on the scene, they were able to rescue the trapped families.

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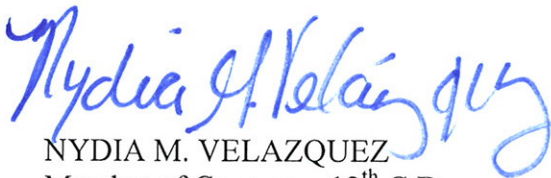
Neighborhoods with growing populations need more services not less. Initiating drastic cuts and closing the station will only undo the progress made in the Bushwick and neighboring communities.

It is ironic that just a few months ago in September 2008, the City Administration held a centennial celebration for Engine Company 271/Ladder 124 whereby this station was coined as a "*premier company with a great history*" by the Commissioner and then Brooklyn Borough Commander Edward Kilduff now Assistant Chief in for the borough.

In closing, we join with the community and express our dismay and opposition to this misguided approach to balance the City's budget at the expense of the safety and security of the Bushwick and Ridgewood community.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this matter. We look forward to hearing from you. If you should have any questions, please feel free to contact us or Congressional Liaison Evelyn Cruz @ (718) 599-36589.

Sincerely,



NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ  
Member of Congress, 12<sup>th</sup> C.D.



ANTHONY WEINER  
Member of Congress, 9<sup>th</sup> C.D.

cc: Hon. Councilwoman Diana Reyna, 34<sup>th</sup> Council District  
Hon: Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta, NYC Fire Department  
Nadine Whitted, District Manager, Community Board 4 Brooklyn  
Gary Giordano, District Manager, Community Board 5, Queens

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